



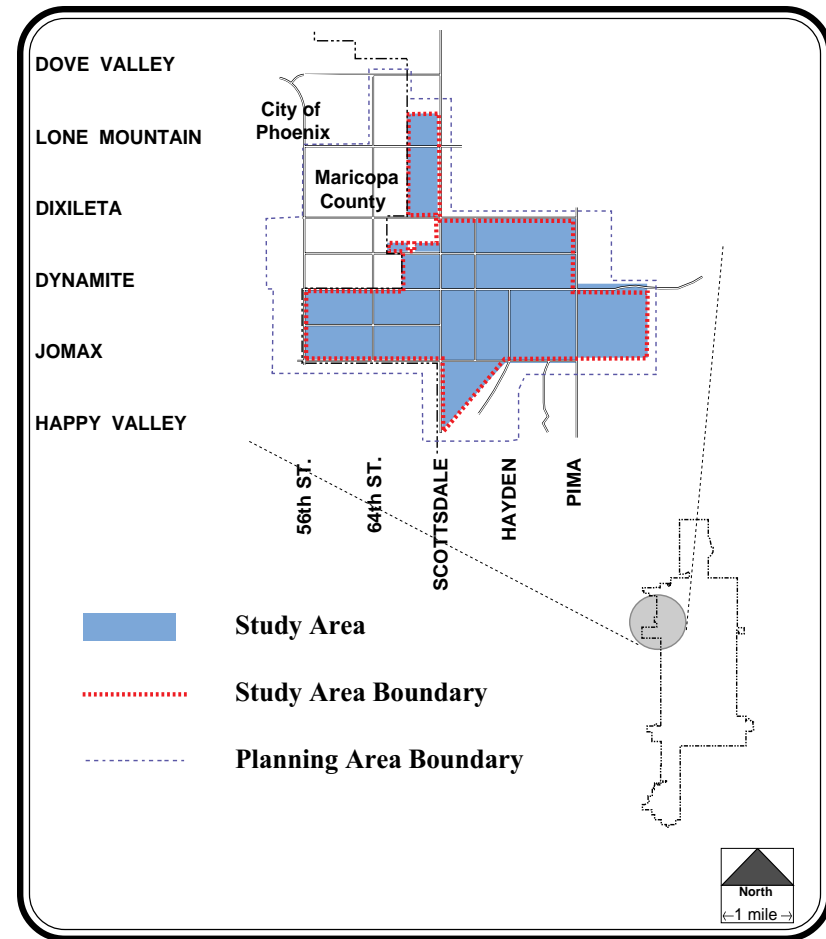
Introduction

Welcome to the Desert Foothills Character Plan!

This plan sets forth the long-range **vision** created for the Desert Foothills area through the character area planning process. The goals and strategies in this report lay out the intentions for this area. A separate companion document titled “Implementation,” includes methods that will illustrate how to attain this vision.

The Desert Foothills character area is approximately eight square miles, generally located between Dixileta Road to the north, Jomax Road to the south, the City’s western boundary and 96th Street to the east.

One of the prominent factors that has contributed a great deal to defining the character of this area is the fractured land ownership pattern, with parcel sizes ranging between one and five acres. This land ownership pattern contributes to random or what is also known as piecemeal development. Piecemeal development can be associated with minimal infrastructure, unpaved streets and diversity in housing styles and lifestyles. Residents have chosen to reside in this area due to many of these aforementioned characteristics. This character plan sets forth the vision to balance this rural lifestyle with the unique and fragile upper Sonoran desert experience in the study area.



Desert Foothills Character Area Study Process

Throughout the evolution of the Desert Foothills character study, there has been a tremendous amount of participation from the residents and property owners of the area. The initial contact between Community Planning, the residents and property owners was made in early June 1997. At this point in time, a newsletter that addressed many of the common

questions asked about character area plans was circulated to the Desert Foothills residents and property owners. In addition, several articles appeared in the local newspapers discussing the Desert Foothills character area and the long range planning process.

In early July 1997, a mail questionnaire was dispersed to approximately 800 residents, property owners and local interest of the Desert Foothills area. Thirty-three percent (33%) of these questionnaires were completed and returned. The intent of the questionnaire was to gauge the prevailing issues and trends and propagate some thoughts about the future of this area.

While the results of the questionnaire were being tabulated, a “Background Report” was prepared. This document essentially tells the story of how the Desert Foothills area has evolved to where it is today. It includes the environmental and physical determinants, City policies and regulations, and demographic projections specific to the Desert Foothills study area.

In late October 1997, both the “Background Report” and questionnaire results were shared with residents and property owners at a public open house. Approximately 70 participants browsed the questionnaire results, pictures, charts, maps and graphics. The “Background Report” and questionnaire results can be found in the appendices.



*October 30, 1997 Desert Foothills Open House
Participants review survey results.*

The open house was followed by a series of neighborhood discussions between the Desert Foothills residents, property owners, and city staff. These discussion groups provided the opportunity for participants to discuss with each other and city staff their ideas for preserving the rural identity of the Desert Foothills area.

In early April 1998, a workshop was conducted to summarize the neighborhood discussions and explore the rural desert vision collaboratively as a group of neighborhoods. Similar to previous phases in the outreach program, all residents, property owners and local interest were invited and encouraged to participate.

In late April 1998, at the direction of the Mayor and Council, the active character area plans were placed on hold pending the outcome of two very different growth initiatives - one proposed by the State legislature and the other by the Sierra Club.

During this hiatus, the number of inquiries from residents and property owners concerning the status of the Desert Foothills character area continued to escalate. Many of these inquiries focused on preserving the integrity of the scenic corridors; massing of buildings, scale and color; and enhancing the continuity of the trail system and natural open space.

In October 1998, due to these intensifying concerns,

Community Planning made a recommendation to City Council to reopen the Desert Foothills character area study to further examine these issues and establish a plan that preserves the character of the Desert Foothills area.

After the 1998 holiday season, a working group composed of



*January 29, 1998
Desert Foothills Property Owners Association
- discussion.*

the leadership within the Desert Foothills area began to meet. The intent of this working group was to look at techniques for implementing the Rural Desert vision and ensuring their constituents were kept informed through their outreach programs (newsletters or association meetings).

The working group focused on how the circulation system, on-site development and public facilities could better be integrated into the lush Sonoran desert and preserve and/or enhance the rural lifestyle.

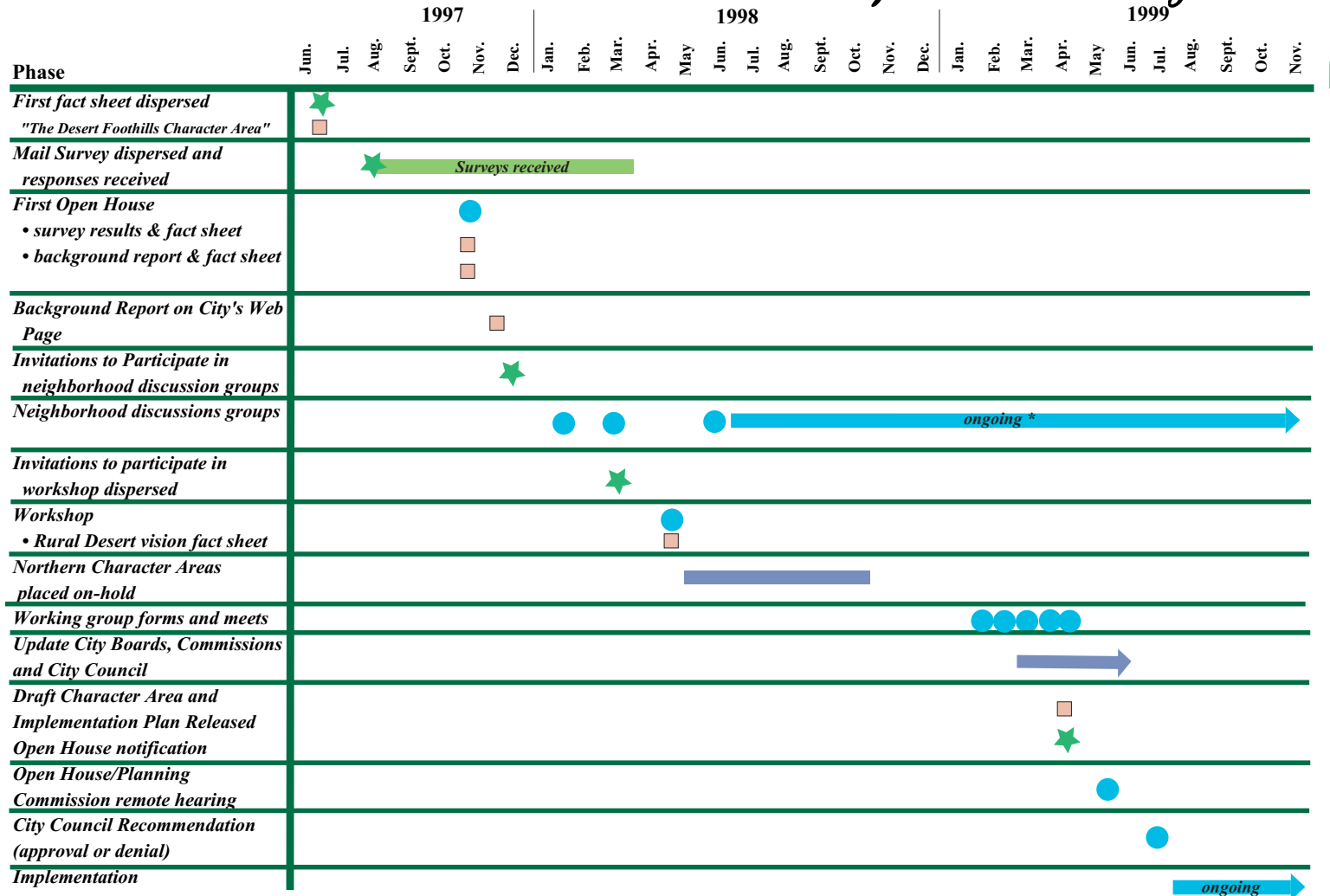
After the working group deliberations were concluded a draft of the Character Area and Implementation Plans were shared with the residents and property owners during an open house and remote Planning Commission hearing in May 1999. In addition, numerous City Boards and Commissions received updates of the character area and discussed the Plan's recommendations before the Plan was forwarded on to the City Council for adoption in the summer 1999.

The time line on the following page illustrates this extensive public outreach process. The public involvement was critical in the formulation of the vision, goals and strategies and will continue to be just as important during the implementation phase of this character area plan.



*January - March 1999
Desert Foothills Working Group - discussions.*

Desert Foothills Character Area Community Outreach Program



★ Notifications dispersed to residents, property owners and neighbors of study area

● Public meeting held

*Community Planning staff is committed to meet with any interested neighborhood or property owners organization during any phase of the study.

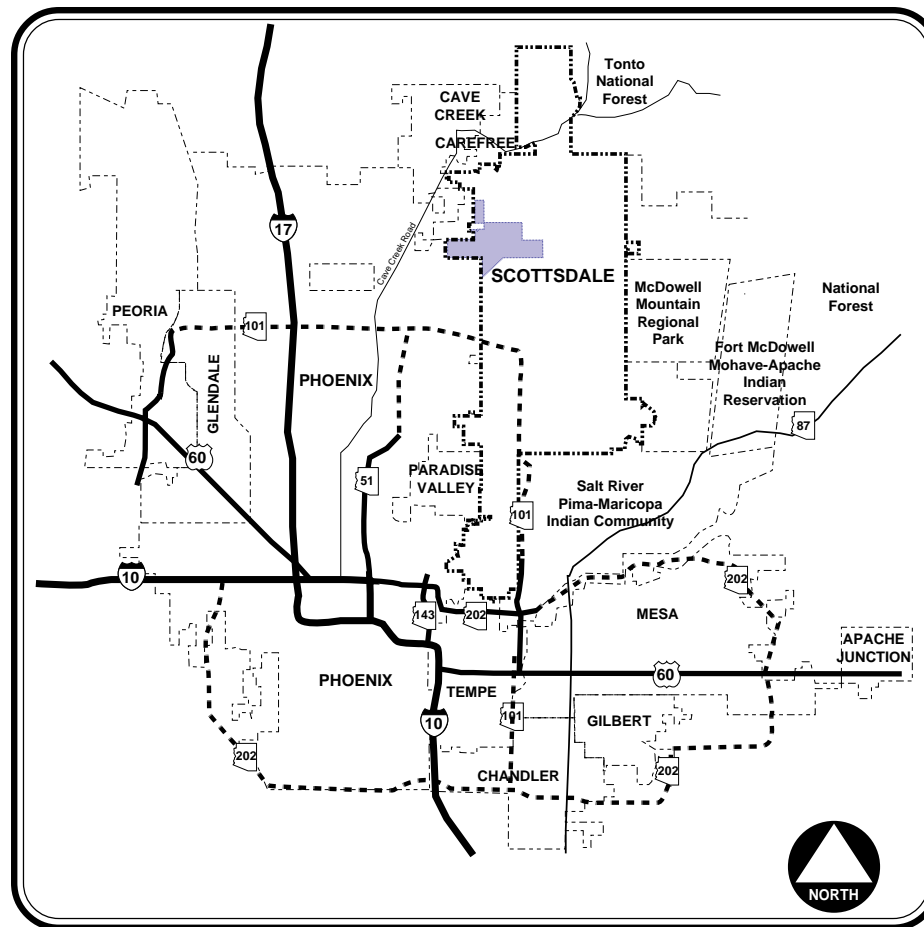
■ Information concerning progress of study released

Dynamics of the Desert Foothills - Past Planning Efforts

The Desert Foothills character area is located in the northeastern quadrant of Maricopa County, in the northwestern portion of Scottsdale. Up until the early 1980s, much of these lands were still under the jurisdiction of Maricopa County. The county developed and approved a long range plan to help guide the future growth anticipated in this region. This plan, the Desert Foothills Plan, outlined numerous broad policies and guidelines for the ultimate development of this area.

Much of these lands were further studied after they were annexed into Scottsdale and Phoenix in the early 1980s. In 1985, Phoenix adopted the Peripheral Area C & D Plan for a 110 square mile area from 67th Avenue to the City of Scottsdale's western boundary and Carefree Highway to the Central Arizona Project Canal. This plan established specific goals and

policies for the future development of the area. This area is now known as Phoenix's Desert View Village. This Village includes the master planned communities of Tatum Ranch, Tatum Highlands, Dove Valley Ranch, Desert Ridge and numerous subdivisions between these planned communities.



Meanwhile, in 1986, Scottsdale developed and adopted the Tonto Foothills General Plan for the area generally north of Deer Valley Road. This plan incorporated policies that dealt with balancing the anticipated future development with the environmentally sensitive lands such as hillsides, boulder outcroppings and washes. Many of the policies established in the Tonto Foothills plan are reflected in today's General Plan.

After the adoption of the Tonto Foothills plan, a down zoning occurred in a portion of the Desert Foothills area.

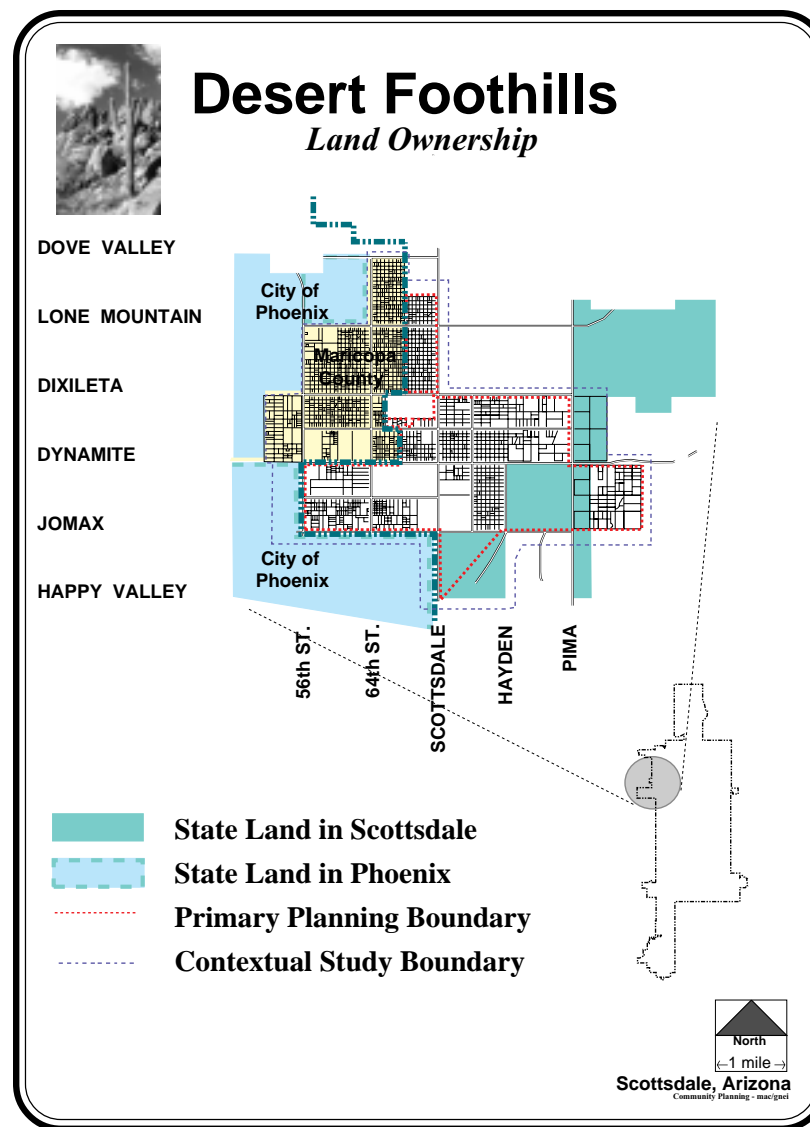
This down zoning changed the County zoning from one home per one acre to one home per two acres over much of this area.

This in effect stopped the Government Land Office (G.L.O.) parcel lot splitting activity in the area and helped to preserve the desert and washes. As a result of this down zoning, the developer of Bent Tree Estates sued the city. As part of an out of court settlement, the developer was allowed to revert back to the original county zoning of one home per one acre. In latter years, the developer of Monterra was also granted one acre zoning due to the precedence established in the Bent Tree suit.

Today, nestled between Phoenix and Scottsdale remains approximately four square miles of a county island. This general area north of Dynamite, south of Lone Mountain, east of 56th Street and west of the current City of Scottsdale boundary was studied in the Black Mountain Area Plan, 1989. This plan mainly serves as an advisory document for those residing and/or developing in this county island and desiring to be considered for future annexation.

Whether Scottsdale and/or Phoenix annex this land remains questionable. The decision ultimately rests in the hands of the residents and property owners of these lands and the acceptance from City Council. Presently, Scottsdale provides both water and waster water services to the majority of this area, while Rural Metro provides fire protection. The County provides all other services.

Today, the Desert Foothills area is approximately one-third built out, however, the number of real estate transactions and building permits are steadily escalating. This growing interest is based in individuals and families who desire a relatively remote area and the lush upper Sonoran desert. This common thread of experiencing and living in the desert is what attracts



many families to the area. However, more desert is being transformed into homes as more people choose to reside in the area.

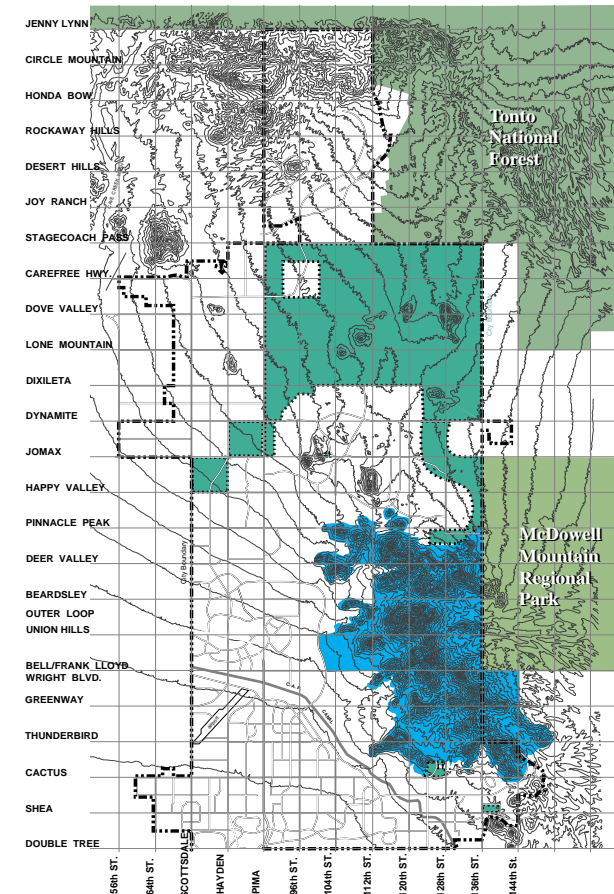
In 1996, in response to the rapid growth being experienced in north Scottsdale, the City Council appointed the Desert Preservation Task Force to develop a plan to preserve the Sonoran Desert. The mission of the Task Force was:

“Recommend implementation of a strategic plan to preserve the Sonoran Desert and retain and enhance the unique character of our community.”

In April 1997, the Task Force’s Strategic Plan was presented to City Council. This plan included definitions of meaningful desert open space, open space standards, trail recommendations, and a desert open space system as shown on the map to the right. This desert open space system will link to scenic corridors such as the Desert Foothills Scenic Drive along Scottsdale Road.

The majority of this land in the desert open space system is under the jurisdiction of the State Land Trust. A relatively new program within the State Land department, the Arizona Preserve Initiative (A.P.I.) allows local governments to request portions of State lands within their jurisdiction to be reclassified for conservation purposes. This request if approved would give the city the opportunity to purchase the land for conservation purposes and remove any potential for future development.

Scottsdale submitted their request for this land in late 1998. It



**RECOMMENDED STUDY BOUNDARY (RSB)
FOR THE MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE: 36,400 ACRES**



16,460 Acre Original Recommended Study Boundary Used from 1995 to 1998 for Expenditures of Voter Approved Sales Tax Revenues
19,940 Acre Expanded Recommended Study Boundary August 1998, Resolution No. 5143

is anticipated that the State's review process will take at least one year. In the meantime, the citizens of Scottsdale have chosen to extend the .2% sales tax to purchase preserve land in the McDowell Mountains to the lands outlined in the adjacent map. Whether all or a portion of these lands are preserved in the future is uncertain. The success is dependent on the State Land Trust reclassification of the state lands, additional funding sources and priority of land acquisitions. However, if Scottsdale is successful in preserving these lands, the total desert and mountain preserve would equal 35 square miles or the approximate size of the city of Chandler.



The Desert Foothills Scenic Drive is one of three designated scenic corridors bisecting the area. The Scenic Drive has been a unique landmark of the area for more than three decades and has helped preserve the desert character of the area.

Beginning in 1963, the county worked with the local residents to designate the "Desert Foothills Scenic Drive" north of Happy Valley Road to the Carefree Highway and Cave Creek Road to Deer Valley Road. In 1968, the County established a small park for the Scenic Drive just south of Jomax on Scottsdale Road.

In recent years, the City of Scottsdale Tourism Development Commission and the Neighborhood Enhancement Commission have dedicated funds to the Scenic Drive to enhance Scenic Drive identification signs and construct an exhibit at the

Monument site (*shown above*).

In addition to the desert open space system, the Preservation Commission forwarded a series of recommendations for scenic corridors in late 1998. These recommendations set forth an ambitious vision to preserve the integrity of scenic corridors by banning temporary signs, limiting lights, maintaining views of distant mountains, blending infrastructure into the natural desert setting and widening the scenic setbacks.

The aforementioned plans, studies and recommendations outline a rich history of planning efforts in and around the Desert Foothills area. From the County's Desert Foothills plans to Scottsdale's preservation initiatives a tremendous amount of work has been done to help build a better community - a community that seeks to balance one's lifestyle with the sensitive Sonoran desert environment.